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ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 142008Z NOV 06
FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 7353
INFO RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 4402
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 5916
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ 4981
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 3243
RUEHQH/AMEMBASSY QUITO 2033
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RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 3502
RUEHRC/AMCONSUL RECIFE 5853
RUEHSO/AMCONSUL SAO PAULO 8601
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RUCPDO/USDOC WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 09 BRASILIA 002399

SIPDIS

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DEPT PASS USAID TO LAC/RSD, LAC/SAM, G/ENV, PPC/ENV
TREASURY FOR USED IBRD AND IDB AND INTL/MDB
USDA FOR FOREST SERVICE: LIZ MAHEW
INTERIOR FOR DIR INT AFFAIRS: K WASHBURN
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TAGS: SENV EAGR EAID TBIO ECON SOCI XR BR
SUBJECT: SOUTH AMERICA ESTH NEWS, NUMBER 84

11. The following is the eighty-fourth in a series of newsletters, published by the Brasilia Regional Environmental Hub, covering environment, science and technology, and health news in South America. The information below was gathered from news sources from across the region, and the views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Hub office or our constituent posts. Addressees who would like to receive a user-friendly email version of this newsletter should contact Larissa Stoner at stonerla@state.gov. The e-mail version also contains a calendar of upcoming ESTH events in the region.

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Agriculture

13. Dole Food Company Inaugurates Organic Banana Farm in Colombia

NOV. 06, 2006 - Dole Food Company recently inaugurated a new organic banana facility in the La Guajira region of Colombia. Named the "Don Pedro" farm, the USD8 million growing, harvesting, packing and shipping facility will employ more than 1,000 local residents. Don Pedro is the first banana farm in Colombia with a suspended cableway harvesting system that transports product from the farm directly to the packing plants. The facility also has a state-of-the-art irrigation system, advanced fruit cleansing operations and an aerial fruit propping system.

Source - US Embassy Bogota

14. Colombia: Legume to Counter El Nio

NOV. 06, 2006 - *Cratylia argentea*, a legume that is resistant to prolonged drought and highly nutritious for cattle, could be cultivated by Colombian ranchers to counter the effects of the climate phenomenon known as El Nio, according to the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT). "It is a bush rich in protein, with a high capacity for sprouting during dry periods, replacing part of the commercial concentrates, and maintaining cows' milk production when the weather is too dry or too humid," Carlos Lascano, a CIAT expert who has been studying the plant for 15 years, told Tierramerica. He said the legume can adapt to different regions of the country, but is particularly useful along the Atlantic coast, a cattle-raising region that sees long dry periods, which could become worse with El Nio, which is predicted to intensify towards the end of the year.

Source - Tierramerica

15. Brazil: Delay in Law to Limit Eucalyptus

OCT. 23, 2006 - Far past the 45 days predicted, the delay continues for the parliamentary vote on a bill that aims to stop the expansion of eucalyptus in the Brazilian municipality of Sao Luiz do

Paraitinga, 170 km from Sao Paulo. This was the report to Tierramerica from Marcelo Toledo, an official from the judiciary and promoter of the bill. Monoculture of the fast-growing eucalyptus tree for the paper pulp industry already covers "more than 10 percent" of the municipal territory of 73,700 hectares, causing a rural exodus, pollution and destruction of historic monuments, he said. The bill was presented Aug. 22 with 540 signatures, surpassing the national constitution's required minimum of five percent of the local electorate, but lawmakers have yet to vote on it. Home to 10,800 people, the mountainous ad forested Paraitinga lives from tourism and small farms.

Source - Tierramerica

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16. Colombia: Organic Coffee for Japan

OCT. 23, 2006 - Beginning in February, the indigenous Arhuacos of Colombia's northern Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, will export annually 15 containers to Japan with 289 tons of Tiwun coffee, which the community grows using environmentally sustainable methods. Francisco Zalabata, member of the Tayrona Indigenous Confederation, told Tierramerica that the commercialization of the coffee will take place through an agreement signed Oct. 19 by his group and the city of Santa Marta and the Community Trade Network. Zalabata said Tiwun is a special coffee grown by about 350 indigenous families, following rules of fair trade, and is considered among those with best aroma, taste and texture in the world. The aim of the network in marketing the product, says Zalabata, is to reach the customer without intermediaries, so that the economic benefits of exporting their coffee go directly to the growers.

Source - Tierramerica

Water Issues

17. Colombia: Rodrigo Vivas, Winner of the Sasakawa Prize for His Contribution to the Fight against Desertification

NOV. 04, 2006 - Colombian lawyer and activist Rodrigo Vivas won the 2006 Sasakawa Prize, awarded annually by the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) and the Nippon Foundation, for his "rainwater harvest" project, to combat desertification. The award, which includes a 200,000-dollar prize, is one of the most prestigious environmental laurels in the world. "The lord of the rains", as his friends call him, created the non-governmental Fundacion Accion Ambiental (Environmental Action Foundation) six years ago, focusing on local issues. The foundation works with farmers to encourage protection of biodiversity, proper water management, food security efforts and strengthening of community organizations. Vivas is also executive director of the Consortium for Sustainable Hillside Agriculture, CIPASLA, which is active in 23 rural districts of the Andean region of Colombia. Click on the link below for the complete Q&A.

Source - Tierramerica

18. Amazon River 'Switched Direction'

OCT. 24, 2006 - The world's largest river, the Amazon, once flowed from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific - the opposite of its present direction, a study shows. Sedimentary rocks in the central part of South America contain ancient mineral grains that must have come from the eastern part of the continent. Geologist Russell Mapes says this must mean that about 145-65 million years ago, the Amazon flowed east to west.

Source - BBC

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Forests

19. Peru: Forest Transparency Workshop Shows Opportunities

NOV. 07, 2006 - USAID, U.S. Forest Service and State sponsored an Amazon Basin forest transparency workshop in Lima, September 19-22, 2006. Over 100 participants from governments, industry and NGOs found common ground in identifying solutions to improve forest governance. Firms and NGO's exhibited services and technologies that aid log tracking, forest certification and mapping of changes in forest cover in a novel "Market of Ideas." Bolivian and Peruvian community-based NGO's formed a plan to exchange best practices; USG, Tropical Forest Trust and other collaborators began planning for a new short training course for university faculty in Amazon forestry management programs.

Source - LIMA 00004289

10. Brazil: Amazon Deforestation Lowest Since 1991

OCT. 27, 2006 - Deforestation in the Amazon rain forest has declined to its lowest level since 1991 due to strict enforcement of environmental regulations, according to the Brazilian government. Preliminary figures released by the environmental ministry showed 5,057 square miles of the rain forest were destroyed this year -- the lowest level since 4,258 square miles were lost in 1991. The numbers released Oct. 26 are estimates based on satellite images. The final results are expected before the end of the year. Last year, the rain forest lost 7,250 square miles. "It's the second year in a row there's a decline, so it's good news and we must applaud the government," said Paulo Adario, director of Greenpeace's Amazon campaign. "But our preoccupation is that the average of annual destruction remains high. More needs to be done."

Source - NY Times

11. Largest Seizure of Illegally Logged Amazon Rainforest Timber Announced By Authorities

OCT. 23, 2006 - IBAMA, Brazil's environmental agency, announced the largest seizure ever of illegally logged timber from the Amazon rainforest. During a week-long operation -- code named Kojima -- in late September, authorities impounded nearly 15,000 cubic meters of unlicensed wood in the Amazonian state of Para. The agency said it was probably the largest seizure ever in the state. The Kojima Operation follows the three-week Guariba Operation which confiscated 8,500 cubic meters of sawnwood and logs in the state of Mato Grosso. Authorities said the Kojima Operation would continue in the region until at least December, according to a report from the International Tropical Timber Organization's (ITTO) Tropical Timber Market Report. 2006 has seen a marked increase in environmental law enforcement in the Amazon. More than 120 people including 16 agents

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of the federal environmental protection agency -- have been arrested for operating illegal logging and timber smuggling in the Amazon rainforest and southern Brazil since the beginning of the year.

Source - Mongabay see also BRASILIA 00002319

Wildlife

12. USFWS Provides Training against Illegal Wildlife Traffic in Brazil

NOV. 06, 2006 - A team of four officers from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), part of the U.S. Department of the Interior, provided Brazilian Federal Police with a training course to prevent and combat illegal wildlife trafficking over the two week period of October 16-27, 2006. The U.S Delegation was headed by special agent Jill Birchell and complemented by special agents Gary

Young, Marty Hernandez and forensics scientist Dyan Straughan. The course, financed by the Narcotics Affairs Section at the Embassy, took place in Bonito located in the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso do Sul, one of the richest regions of the country in terms of Wildlife biodiversity. Both the United States and Brazilian Federal Police believe the exchange of information will help disrupt criminal organizations, in both countries, that profit from the illegal trade in wildlife.

Source - BRASILIA 00002325

Fishing & Marine Conservation

¶13. Argentina: Sabalo Threatened by Overfishing

NOV. 06, 2006 - The non-governmental organization Proteger Foundation revealed on Oct. 30 a nearly secret report by Argentina's fisheries agency which admits that the fish known as the sabalo (*Prochilodus lineatus*) is at risk of population collapse due to overexploitation. Proteger, which has denounced the overfishing of this species for years, agreed with the forecast, but criticized the agency for failing to publicize the official study. According to Proteger, some 70,000 tons of sabalo -- the leading river-fish export -- are caught annually, half what was caught 20 years ago with a smaller fishing capacity.

Source - Tierramerica

Science & Technology

¶14. Brazil: Plant Fibers to Replace Asbestos

OCT. 23, 2006 - Research at the University of Campina Grande, in the
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eastern Brazilian state of Paraiba, explores the potential uses of sisal (*Agave sisalana*) as a substitute for asbestos, a toxin and carcinogen, as a construction material. The plant, which is grown in the semiarid Brazilian Northeast, "is low cost, biodegradable, abundant, and is a non-carcinogen renewable resource," research coordinator Antonio Farias Leal told Tierramerica. "Its use would help the social and economic development of Brazil's poorer regions, thrashed by drought, where no other perennial crop thrives except sisal, and where nearly a million people rely on it for survival," he said. Brazil is the world's leading producer of sisal, generating about 56 percent of the global total.

Source - Tierramerica

Pollution

¶15. Bolivia: Pilcomayo River Pollution Attracts New Attention

OCT. 27, 2006 - For centuries, mining and milling wastes from Bolivia's Potosi mining district have polluted the Pilcomayo River, an important body of water in Bolivia's southwest. A recent study indicated that many agricultural fields and waterways are contaminated with heavy metals and arsenic, which may have long-term implications for local communities. Past proposals to address the river's pollution have generated few results, but a new initiative from the USAID-supported Center for the Promotion of Sustainable Technologies may change that.

Source - LA PAZ 00002934

Energy

¶16. Brazil and India join Senegal for Biofuel Production

NOV. 01, 2006 - In a bid to decrease its dependence on oil and produce environmentally-friendly energy, Senegal will cooperate with Brazil and India to launch a biofuel production program by 2007. Through public-private partnerships, Brazil will provide scientific and technological know-how, Indian entrepreneurs will supply the capital, and Senegal will offer land and labor. Biofuels, such as bioethanol, biodiesel and biogas, are renewable fuels generally produced from agricultural crops or organic matter. The project is part of a plan by the Senegalese government to regenerate its rural economy through investment in biofuels to eventually replace the country's daily consumption of 33,000 oil barrels. It was announced on 27 October by Farba Senghor, Senegal's minister of agriculture, rural hydraulics and food security in a meeting with a delegation of Brazilian biofuel experts in Dakar, Senegal.

Source - SciDev

¶17. Chilean Energy Supplier to Pursue Renewable Energy Projects

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OCT. 31, 2006 - Chile's principal energy supplier Endesa is exploring renewable energy sources through its subsidiary Eco Endesa. Eco Endesa is embarking on projects that would generate energy using biomass, small-scale hydroelectric dams and wind power.

The projects are part of an initiative by Eco Endesa to invest USD50 million in producing over 30 megawatts of renewable energy by 2009. The investment represents a growing interest in renewable energy, which is due in part to transmission cost exemptions and discounts granted by the Ley Corta II, a new energy law passed in 2005 that created numerous incentives to invest in energy. Eco Endesa already has several projects in late phases of development, including the USD17 million Canelo wind energy park in Region IV, and the small-scale hydroelectric dam Ojos de Agua in Region VII. Planned to be completed in the next two years, the projects will produce just over 9.5 megawatts of power each.

Source - Santiago Times (no link)

¶18. Bolivia: Clean Production Practices Increase Efficiency, Lower Costs

OCT. 26, 2006 - Clean production practices introduced by the USAID-supported Center for the Promotion of Sustainable Technologies have increased efficiency and lowered costs for more than 90 Bolivian businesses. [Several] case studies suggest that lower production costs provide powerful incentives for firms to modify production processes to improve efficiency and cut pollution, thereby making them more competitive in domestic and international markets. Companies have also adopted corporate social responsibility programs to minimize environmental damage.

Source - LA PAZ 00002903

¶19. Brazil Bus Firm Powers Fleet on Biofuels

OCT. 25, 2006 - South America's largest city might be getting a bit greener. A bus company in Sao Paulo is now powering part of its fleet with a new mix of biofuels and diesel in an effort to curb emissions and reduce reliance on fossil fuels. The mix - a blend of 30 percent biodiesel, 8 percent alcohol and 62 percent petroleum diesel - will eventually be used by 1,900 buses, about a quarter of Sao Paulo's entire bus fleet, said Paulo Mendes, director of B100, which was created by the Itaim Paulista bus company to research alternative fuels. The fuel was developed as part of joint effort between B100 and state-run oil company Petroleo Brasileiro SA, known as Petrobras. Brazil has been a leader in the development of biofuels, with ethanol providing about 17 percent of the country's fuel needs. Brazil also will start requiring that biodiesel be added to regular diesel at a rate of 2 percent in 2008. By the year 2013, trucks will have to run on 5 percent biodiesel.

Source -Washington Post

¶20. Brazil Teams Up With NASA for Aviation Fuel

AUG. 29, 2006 - Brazilian biofuel company, Tecbio, has linked up with NASA and US aerospace firm Boeing to develop a biokerosene aviation fuel. The alternative vegetable-oils based fuel to power airplanes was invented by Tecbio in 1980 and flight tested in Brazil in 1984 before being abandoned. It attracted fresh interest after oil prices rose to record levels this year. A memorandum of understanding was signed in early August. Based in Fortaleza, capital of the northeastern state of Ceara, Tecbio has a biofuel project in the state of Piaui, also in northeast Brazil. Tecbio, Brazil's largest biodiesel technology company, is implementing six projects and seeking funding for another four.

Source - MercoPress

General

121. U.S.-Chile Environmental Meetings

NOV. 13, 2006 - Chile and the United States met in Santiago October 23-24 to review bilateral environmental cooperation under the Environmental Chapter of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and the Environmental Cooperation Agreement (ECA). Talks focused on reviewing the successful eight projects implemented under the FTA and detailed future areas of cooperation: (1) a national Pollutant Release and Transfer Registry (PRTR); (2) reduction of mining pollution; (3) capacity building to enforce environmental laws; (4) workshop and study tour on voluntary environmental efforts; (5) exchange of agricultural best practices; (6) a study tour on alternatives to use of methyl bromide; (7) capacity building to improve wildlife protection and management; and, (8) a pilot project to retrofit diesel buses in Santiago to reduce emissions.

Source - SANTIAGO 00002369

122. Chile: Conama Sets Sights on New Environmental Superintendent

OCT. 27, 2006 - A complete overhaul in the administration of environmental affairs is on the horizon in Chile, with the proposed creation of an Environment Ministry and the announcement of a planned Environmental Superintendent in charge of enforcing regulations. National Environmental Commission (Conama) Director Ana Lya Uriarte announced on October 25th that immediately after adding the final touches to a bill creating the post of Environment Minister - currently being debated in Congress - legislators plan to author another bill that establishes the functions of the Superintendent. Under the current system, individual ministries and government agencies are responsible for applying and enforcing environmental regulations, under Conama's supervision. The lack of an independent enforcement agency has been the source of much criticism.

Source - Santiago Times (no link)

123. WWF: "Ecological Overshoot" Threatens Earth's Resources

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OCT. 26, 2006 - WWF's 2006 Living Planet Report, the group's biennial statement on the state of the natural world, says that on current projections humanity will be using two planets' worth of natural resources by 2050 - if those resources have not run out by then. It also confirms the trend of biodiversity loss seen in previous Living Planet reports. Already resources are depleting, with the report showing that vertebrate species populations have declined by about one-third in the 33 years from 1970 to 2003. At the same time, humanity's Ecological Footprint - the demand people place upon the natural world - has increased to the point where the Earth is unable to keep up in the struggle to regenerate.

Source - MercoPress

124. Argentina: Plastic Bricks Certified for Building

OCT. 23, 2006 - Argentina's Housing Secretariat granted certification of technical fitness to a prototype of a brick made from plastic bottles for use in construction of houses and buildings of up to two stories. "This allows access to official funds for housing made with bricks produced from plastic waste," Horacio Berretta, director of the Economical Housing Experiment Center in the central province of Cerdoba, told Tierramerica. Berretta acknowledged that there are various initiatives for construction with alternative materials, but noted that not all obtain certification. This recognition permits large-scale manufacture of the bricks, beginning with pilot projects in Buenos Aires and in the southwest province of Catamarca. The plastic bricks are lighter than traditional bricks, he said. They are more water and fire resistant, soundproof, and easy to install.

Source - Tierramerica

Sobel